



Security Council

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Letter dated 4 April 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

In a letter addressed to you dated 29 March 2001 (S/2001/312), the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations attached a press release from his Government entitled "Ethiopian mines responsible for incident with United Nations vehicles in Tsorona". The Eritrean document claimed that "mine experts have now confirmed that Ethiopia laid these mines". This was a crude attempt implying United Nations concurrence in blaming Ethiopia. The facts show otherwise. The United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) Mine Action Coordination Committee (MACC) spokesman in the Eritrean capital Asmara, Phil Lewis, said categorically that the statement by the Eritrean Commission for Coordination with UNMEE was "absolutely not endorsed by UNMEE-MACC". More important was what his UNMEE counterpart in Addis Ababa, Kim Brandt, said: "... *without all records and a full database*" on mine information from the two parties, "it is *not possible to verify which party planted the mine*" (emphasis added). In their futile desire to "score" points against Ethiopia, the Eritrean leaders further wish to mislead the Security Council and the international community. They allege that "Ethiopia continues to reject appeals to provide minefield information" to UNMEE. The Council and UNMEE know that Ethiopia was the first to submit minefield information. This was done on 11 March 2001, nine days before Eritrea did. At the time, UNMEE-MACC described Ethiopia's action as "the first significant handover of landmine information since UNMEE arrived in the region"!

Ethiopia believes that providing full data by both parties is essential if one is to avoid the kind of incident which occurred. Acting on this will make places like Tsorona (inside Eritrea and previously heavily mined to avoid its capture by Ethiopia) safer for the displaced to return and United Nations peacekeepers.

In Ethiopia's view, the latest Eritrean accusation is nothing but an attempt to divert attention for their lack of *not having signed the status-of-forces agreement*, their refusal to date to allow UNMEE *to establish the most practicable direct high-altitude flight between Asmara and Addis Ababa*, and the *completion of the rearrangement of their forces*, thus facilitating the establishment of the Temporary Security Zone. Ethiopia has already complied with all of these, as requested by the Security Council. It is time for Eritrea to stop dithering and begin fulfilling its



obligations under the 12 December 2000 Algiers Agreement. No amount of diversionary acrobatics will work.

(Signed) Abdulmejid **Hussein**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
